

## “Getting Off the Piano Bench”

### Advantages:

Learning with the whole body / mind. Thinking, Hearing and Feeling music with the whole being.

When a child is tired or frustrated, movement offers variety, clarification, fun, and freedom of expression.

Fingers are not the source of musicality. Rather, they learn to express musicality.

What is the source of musicality? Breath? Voice? Movement? Language?  
Make your own list and think about how you can bring it into your piano teaching.

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Basics: beat, motive, phrase, form, measure, coordination, internalization of pulse / tempo.

### Trampoline Game.

Imagine being on a trampoline: bounce gently using both feet 8 times. Bounce from side to side, one beat each side. Alternate between first type of bounce on both feet, and the side to side version. 8 beats each.

Try freezing instead of bouncing on both feet. (Internalization of the beat)

Try walking 8 steps instead of bouncing side to side. Alternate between the walking 8 steps and the freezing for 8 beats.

What would a 2 beat side to side be? Try 1-1-2 pattern.

Face a partner. Starting on your right foot, move sideways 1-1-2 (RLR) and back 1-1-2 (LRL). Then walk 8 beats to find another partner and repeat. Snap your fingers during the half note. (step-step-step-snap, step-step-step-snap)

CD: Zebila, African drummer. (Tennis Ball Version)

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Feeling the whole phrase as a unit, a melodic or rhythmic event, a musical sentence riding on a steady beat.

Feeling 1-1-2 as a motive (or a short phrase). This repeats in the Trampoline exercise and is followed by 8 steps, giving us a short-short-long phrase structure. Face a partner and pull the stretchy stocking following the music which will change tempo from time to time, short-short-long.

You may also put your right palm on the right palm of your partner. One pushes, the other is pushed for the first of the short phrases, then the other pushes for the next 1-1-2, then the first person pushes again for the entire duration of the long phrase, 8 beats.

In our activity, we will pull the stocking one way for the first 1-1-2, the other way for the next and then pull all the way through the long phrase.

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Learning to feel long durations or rests through filling them in with beats or subdivisions.

Often students lose rhythmic feeling during long notes, dotted values or rests. "Complementary rhythm", the filling in of silence will aid in stabilizing the rhythms.

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Learning to be able to clap one rhythm while listening to another.  
Canon and polyrhythm.

Independence and coordination of hands. Step one rhythm while clapping another. Start simply with half notes and quarters, eighths and quarters, eighths and halves etc. changing hands and feet. Then add more complexity according to the age and ability of your student.

Advanced students:

2x3, 3x2, 3x4, 4x3 etc. Step one and clap the other.

Game: Listen to a moderate tempo. Subdivide into the number of pulses you are working on: 2 for example. Move (or speak a word with 2 syllables like apple) Repeat with other numbers. (pineapple for 3), (alligator for 4) (hippopotamus for 5).

Then as you are stepping, listen to another number of pulses - 3 for example. (played by the teacher.) Continue to step the 2 while listening to the 3. Clap the 3 when you are ready.

Try to step 3 and listen to 2. Step 3 and clap 2. Finally be able to change hands and feet (2x3, 3x2).

For slow tempi work out the composite rhythm of 2 and 3. Find words which fit each accentuation. For example: "Old MacDonald" = 3x2.

The beats are the prevailing rhythm. Old and Don. The other syllables are the "against" rhythms. Old- Mac- ald.

"He had a farm" - He had farm = 3/4. He and "a". Same rhythmic values - different accentuation.

Composites can be found for 3x4 and 4x3, or 5x3 and 3x5.

Start by finding a tempo which is fast enough to feel the 1 and simply subdivide into 2 and 3. (3 and 4 etc.)

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## Today's Children

Children these days are used to instant results - computers and cell phones. These are their native tongue, my grandson likes to remind me when I don't know how to find something on my lap-top!

They are not used to the daily practice of a musical instrument.

Slow improvement.

Struggle before accomplishment.

Don't be afraid to vary their experiences with coordination challenges and movement events which have a musical goal. Don't be afraid to move with them! They will be embarrassed to move all alone. Be their partner.

Invest in:

tennis balls, an old pair of stockings, cut into 1 stocking minus the foot - better than scarves for pulling through phrases: a couple of pairs of small sticks, available at Play Time in Arlington.

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Workshop for New England Piano Teachers Association on March 27, 2017

Lisa Parker, Dalcroze Games to Improve Rhythm, for the Piano Studio.

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